

Report to: Executive Member Development,
Regeneration and Skills

Date: 30 November 2010

Report of: Director of Development and
Regeneration

Report No:

Contact Officer: Tim Hill, Chief Planning Officer

Tele No: 01204 336004

Report Title: **Planning and Buildings Division Post Implementation Review**

**Confidential /
Non Confidential:**

This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

In accordance with an agreement between the Council and UNISON, to consider the outcome of a post implementation review of the progress and delivery of the Planning and Buildings Division review approved by Executive Member in February 2010.

Recommendations:

The Executive Member is recommended to endorse the conclusions of the post implementation review as contained within the attached report.

Decision:

Background Doc(s):

Appendix 1 Report to Executive Member (DRS/92/10) 22 February 2010.

(for use on Exec Rep)

Signed:

Leader / Executive Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

Summary:

There has been no evidence to suggest that any specific social groups have been adversely impacted by the outcome of the Planning and Buildings Division service review.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Executive Member for Development Regeneration and Skills and the Executive Member for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Diversity approved final proposals to reshape the Planning and Buildings Division in February 2010, and the new structure was in place by 1st April 2010. Since then, the financial situation facing the Division has significantly worsened, primarily due to loss of income from planning fees, which has resulted in a much larger projected overspend. This is set within the context of the wider reductions in funding being considered by the Council following the Emergency Budget announced by the Government in June and the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) published by the Government in October, which outlined their plans to reduce the National deficit over the next 4 years. The current financial position facing the Division and the Department as a whole is covered in more detail in Section 2 below.
- 1.2 The Executive Member will recall that implementation of the savings and efficiency review was the subject of industrial action by UNISON, and that this was concluded with a formal agreement between the Council and UNISON on 30th April 2010. This included an agreement to conduct a formal post-implementation review ("PIR") to ensure that levels of service demand and workload would be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure there is adequate capacity in the new service to deliver the anticipated efficiencies and benefits of the service change. This paper sets out the conclusions of the PIR including details of the context for the review, service performance, and feedback from staff, customers and UNISON which are set out at Sections 3 to 5 below.
- 1.3 Alongside the restructuring it was proposed to streamline business operations to deliver crisp and strategic services which emphasise value for money and outcomes for customers. The following workstreams were set up to deliver the changes to business process and are covered in more detail in Section 6:
- Customers, validation and consultation
 - Accommodation
 - ICT
 - Building Control
 - Communications, change and training
 - Enforcement
 - Member interface

2.0 Current financial performance and staff impact

- 2.1 Financial management within the Division is effective and budgets are being managed to generate an underspend. However, post recession, development activity in the Borough remains extremely low, particularly for larger schemes, reflecting slower than forecast economic recovery at a national level. Together with the loss of the major projects such as Building Schools for the Future, this means that targets for fee

income in planning control and in land charges will be missed by a considerable margin. In addition, the Division has been hit by the unexpected loss of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant, budgeted at £240,000 for the current financial year, announced by Government in June.

- 2.2 In February the report to Executive Member identified a £1.1million financial challenge facing the Division (See Appendix 1, para 2.3). At that stage it was known that the changes being proposed would fall some £250,000 short of the total figure and it was hoped that projections for economic growth and subsequent income would address this Divisional shortfall. As a result however of the significantly worsening financial position, Divisional overspend this year is projected to be nearer to £850,000 which is being managed across the Development and Regeneration Department and reported to Executive Member as part of the quarterly dashboard.
- 2.3 In order to reduce the numbers of staff who may be at risk of compulsory redundancy as a result of the savings the Council is required to make in the coming years, the Council has in place a range of measures including: freezing all vacancies; promoting VER and Voluntary Severance opportunities for staff; and a comprehensive redeployment scheme. Since the implementation of the new structure in April, three members of staff have left the Division and in accordance with the corporate approach, their posts are currently being held vacant, along with other similar vacant posts across the Department. Additionally, three officers are in the process of reducing their hours and at present it is intended to not backfill these hours. As a result, capacity (including some specialist expertise) is below that assumed as part of the savings and efficiency review at the start of the year.

3.0 The Post-Implementation Review

- 3.1 In accordance with the agreement between the Council and UNISON, the PIR was undertaken during October to allow for six full months' operation of the new arrangements, and has involved:
- Quantitative analysis including service demand levels, individual workload and achievement against service key performance indicators (turnaround times, service costs and savings etc), and financial performance;
 - Assessment of qualitative feedback from councillors and the public about their experience of the new service, together with other Council Departments;
 - Three corporately facilitated sessions with UNISON members to share findings on the performance of the new services and to capture the views of the people delivering the services on what is working and what could be improved;
 - Within these, paying particular attention to concerns registered by UNISON in relation to capacity issues within enforcement; and
 - The preparation of this report, on which UNISON have been consulted, with proposals for addressing the issues raised.

4.0 Service Performance

- 4.1 The analysis of service performance set out in Figure 1 below, has been carried out by divisional managers using a consistent comparison, wherever available, between the outcomes from the first two quarters of this year (2010/11) with the same period from last year (i.e. prior to the savings and efficiency review and with the same seasonal factors being involved). The exception relates to customer enquiries, where comparative data for 2009/10 is not available.

Figure 1 - Table of Service Indicators

Development Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Planning Control overall applications determined went up by 20%, with householders increasing by 27% but with larger applications well down;○ Caseload analysis undertaken and caseloads actively managed between officers with staff being utilized from other sections as required;○ Overall 83% of all applications were determined in 8 weeks against 89% last year, well above our target of 65%;○ Major applications consistent at 64% in 13 weeks while householders down from 95% to 90% (target is 80% in 8 weeks);○ Rate of officer delegation is running at over 90%; and○ Success rate on planning appeals is running at 81% compared to 71% last year.
Planning Enforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Enforcement complaints are running 20% lower than last year (460 versus 577);○ 2 specialist staff operating at about the same level of caseload as last year, while other (Assistant) Development Officers range from 3 cases per month up to 7 cases per month (this has included covering for long-term sickness absence);○ All category 1 cases, 80% of category 2 and 76% of category 3, are getting site visits within the required timescales (targets are 60% for each); and○ 52% of cases hit the 13 week milestone for action against target of 50%.
Building Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Building Control applications are down by 4%, with commercial and industrial schemes 20% lower and 35% fewer inspections carried out (as the result of a move away from pro-active inspection and using a risk-based approach in line with government policy);○ Other areas of statutory work are relatively stable;○ this equates to about 4 additional plans checked per month, 1 or 2 additional dangerous buildings cases for relevant staff, but 3 fewer inspections each; and

- 77% of plans are checked within the 13 week statutory period, down slightly from 80% last year.

Land Charges

- Local Searches – across all types of search, volumes are significantly lower this year (1995 versus 2757, down 28%) – a combination of lower activity in the housing market and changes to the regulations relating to personal searches
- However, against this the income generated has gone up by 41% to nearly £127,000

Customer Enquiries

- Reception is now stable with few errors being picked up;
- 2012 calls for planning dealt with in 3 months since go live in OSS, with around 20% transferring to the Division. Just under half are answered using the FAQ database. Since 4 October, 666 calls for BC again with 20% transfer rate; and
- 86% of BC calls answered within standard (target is 85%).

Planning Strategy including sustainable development

- For Planning Strategy work has focused on the Core Strategy Examination which has now been completed in the target timescale; same is true for Waste and Minerals DPDs;
- preparation for the 2011 Census is ongoing in collaboration with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other AGMA authorities and requirement for MARCOMS input identified; and
- the Green Liaison Officers (GLO) network has been launched successfully.

5.0 Post Implementation feedback and analysis

5.1 A significant part of the PIR has been to communicate the service performance figures to UNISON and staff and to engage with staff's own views of the new service, to understand what has worked well and where issues remain. Three workshop sessions were held in October, and the notes of the sessions have subsequently been agreed with UNISON as part of the regular Joint Implementation Meetings that have continued throughout the review period since the proposals were first subject to consultation in November 2009. These notes are included in full at Annex A to this report

5.2 The three main areas where UNISON consider further action and focus is required are as follows:

Vacancies and Capacity

5.2.1 Concerns that whilst workloads are currently being managed, staff are concerned about being stretched and the lack of capacity should there be an improvement in the economy and therefore in demand and casework; and

- 5.2.2 Vacancies should be made available (or vacant posts redesigned) for redeployees, especially when they are within the same Division;

Electronic Working

- 5.2.3 It is felt that the e-working pilot for Building Control staff is yet to conclusively prove effective in being more efficient than the previous paper-based system and therefore should be extended to ensure that technical and other issues are capable of being resolved prior to the wider roll-out of equipment and processes across case officers in Planning and Building Control; and

Planning Committee Papers

- 5.2.4 The need for continued close working and communication with elected Members, both individually and through Planning Committee, to ensure efficient, effective and accountable decision-making on planning applications; and in particular, encouraging the uptake of electronically-delivered reports, agendas and other Committee processes.

- 5.3 Overall, staff also commented on a number of changes which they thought had worked well and supported the Division's ability to maintain service quality with fewer staff, including:

- The transfer of initial customer enquiries, particularly by telephone, to the One Stop Shop, and the associated LAGAN system for identifying and responding to referred queries ("call-backs");
- Officers are dealing with caseloads better than had been anticipated, although in some areas activity had remained at a low level and others were now at capacity;
- Mobile and electronic working was welcomed by Planning Control and enforcement colleagues involved in the pilot;
- The new protocol for working with the Town Councils was supported;
- The development opportunities now available for a wider range of career grade staff were welcomed;
- The new approach to structural calculations consultations in Building Control was reducing unnecessary costs.

- 5.4 The move to the One Stop Shop and the LAGAN system means that we have better management information on how we have dealt with queries, as well as ad hoc feedback from internal and external customers on how they feel their enquiry has been handled. This is supported by normal operational processes including customer forms sent out with Building Control decision notices and periodic Planning Control surveys. Elected Members have also been consulted with regard to feedback both generally

and on specific changes (for example, the availability of electronic versions of Committee reports as .pdf files).

- 5.5 Feedback has generally been positive from all quarters, although there have naturally been teething problems as new systems are bedding in – for example, with builders trying to arrange site inspections for Building Regulations schemes in contact with Access Bolton rather than Divisional officers. Close working between the Division and the One Stop Shop has enabled prompt amendments to business rules to resolve any problems as they arise. There are low error rates in dealing with enquiries, and queries referred to Planning and Building Control are dealt with quickly, therefore few “chasing” calls are registered from customers.
- 5.6 A particular concern both for staff and for elected Members arising from the restructuring was the ability to deal with planning enforcement cases. Taking into account the nature of that particular service, it appears that this has not translated into difficulties in dealing with complaints appropriately, or in customers’ perception of the quality of the service (as measured, for example, through the Council’s complaints system and Ombudsman caseload and outcomes), although caseloads need to be managed carefully and pro-actively.
- 5.7 Communication and comments around low morale remain areas for managers to focus on with staff and HR colleagues; and specific concerns around training for specialist roles and changing regulations, web interface, and managers’ availability to deal with caseload need to be dealt with.

6.0 Workstreams

- 6.1 Alongside the restructuring it was proposed to streamline business operations to deliver crisp and strategic services which emphasise value for money and outcomes for customers. An extract from the staff Teamsite comprising a summary of progress against the key tasks identified is attached at Annex B to this report. This list of twenty separate workstreams has incorporated a number of actions that resulted from staff workshops in May in accordance with the agreement with UNISON (See Annex C). The programme and project management of these workstreams is part of the operational processes in place for the Division, led by the Divisional Management Team.

- 6.1.1 The following workstreams are complete or resolved:

WS7	the transfer of reception and phones;
WS10	new validation arrangements;
WS15	structural calculations;
WS16	training BC surveyors;
WS17	team building and change sessions; and
WS20	new enforcement arrangements;

- 6.1.2 Good progress is being made on the following:

- WS4 moving to monthly planning committees;
- WS6 new Town Council protocols;
- WS8/9 other validation/consultation processes;
- WS11-13 the new web server and the wider ICT refresh;
- WS14 the new BC inspections and charging regime under revised Regulations;
- WS18/19 staff development including a “competencies” framework for career grade staff;

6.1.3 Work is ongoing with regard to the following in order to agree appropriate solutions:

- WS1 accommodation including hotdesking;
- WS2 introducing mobile ICT and working; and
- WS3-5 some other committee processes.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.1 It is considered that the PIR has demonstrated that the services offered by the Division are being maintained with no significant loss of quality or customer satisfaction, within the reduced resources available. This is due in no small measure to the commitment and professionalism of staff, coupled with prioritisation by management and the steady introduction of more streamlined business processes. As these new ways of working continue to be rolled out and adjusted, the aim will be to build upon the good progress so far.
- 7.2 Whilst vacancies are being held in accordance with the corporate approach, the Divisional structure as implemented was always seen as one that had the capability of being adjusted to increase capacity should levels of demand increase significantly in future years to such an extent as to generate sufficient income to support such an increase. The Divisional Management Team are committed to continuing to work with staff to develop solutions to the matters raised, including the use of pilots, particularly around e-working and planning committee.
- 7.3 The Executive Member is recommended to endorse the conclusions of the Post-Implementation Review as contained within this report.

ANNEX A

Notes of issues and topics raised by UNISON members and the options/solutions discussed at the Post Implementation Review Workshops facilitated corporately and attended by divisional management and UNISON members.

TABLE A1 Building Control workshop 21 October 2010

Issue/Topic raised	Summary of concerns/discussion/solution/way forward
Image quality (of scanned plans)	The Principal ICT Officer is continuing to review options for a solution which doesn't create file sizes that are too large
Viewing Multiple Images at once (plan checking)	Options are being developed to make better use of plan checking workstations with multiscreens and/or large touchscreens
Download speed	VPN systems being tested and alternative ways of working are being developed to make downloading in advance a viable alternative
ICT generally	Should not be a one-size-fits-all approach especially if systems are not generating efficiencies. Two-way communication of issues will continue (beyond the review period) as part of ongoing operational management and e-pilots will continue to be used to explore new and efficient ways of working as appropriate.
LAGAN system	Working well – recall targets should be based on working days not weekends. This will resolved.
Customer calls	Some builders have expressed concerns with regard to the new telephone system and delays to urgent jobs in organising a visit – the process of reviewing and updating business rules is continuous and calls are now Priority 1, the improved effects of which will be monitored - Officers have thus far been able to develop the rules organically with the OSS operators which has proved effective.
Workloads	Staff are coping with workloads better than was anticipated, helped by the general level of activity in the market and the new approach to risk management.
Training	There is less time for training and on the job learning – it was acknowledged that Part L training needs to be brought forward and PDRs are yet to take place.
Structural Calculations	The revised approach is working and is saving around 50% on the previous cost. It was claimed and the concerns noted that the Team Leader responsible is only spending around a third of his time on non-management case work.
Morale	Management duly noted that some staff have feelings of poor morale due to the lack of communication and the feeling that concerns that are raised, particularly with regard to the speed and technical complications of the move to a paperless environment, but seem to be ignored by management.

TABLE A2 Planning Control and Technical Support workshop 22 October 2010

Issue/Topic raised	Summary of concerns/discussion/solution/way forward
Vacancies	UNISON feel that the council should be filling vacancies rather than holding them especially when a former member of the Division is on redeployment as a result of the review and at risk of redundancy.
LAGAN system	Working well
Mobile and home working	Working well
Town Councils	The new arrangements are effective and efficient
Planning and Highways Committee	Whilst the move to monthly cycle has reduced some workload, Planning Officer workloads remain as challenging as they were before due to the level of delegation remaining unchanged. The dual report system (electronic and paper) is unsustainable and costly in both finance and staff time. It was noted that Elected Members have PDPs and there are plans to build voicemail and electronic training into the development programme). UNISON raised frustration in the time taken to secure this change especially as assurances were given during consultation process on VFM in Dec 2009 that 'members are on board'. UNISON feel there should be a timetable for implementation of these changes and that some members should be identified as champions to promote the e-working. A solution to the e-report is being worked up.
Caseloads	Planning apps are the priority but additional enforcement duties are conflicting with that – Elected Members continue to pressure the enforcement cases and the structure is not sustainable as it will not be able to cope with an upturn in caseload. The Development Managers for planning and enforcement both confirmed they are monitoring ward case loads together looking over the last 6 month work in order to ensure that the balance between officers is still right. Staff feedback that caseloads are not just about statistics was noted.
Communication	Managers should ensure that they use all techniques and tools available to communicate with staff regarding all aspects of operations (including caseloads) and it was noted that pride sometimes impacts on the ability of staff to raise concerns that they aren't coping as well as they'd like). There was a discussion about staff not wanting to raise issues and managers not knowing they exist and Organisational Development advised that some of this 'divide' is a normal natural reaction and time will heal.
Officer advice	It was noted that sometimes when Elected Members don't take officer advice even when it includes legal advice, the resultant decisions can cost time and money.
Telephone calls	

	It was noted that a number of regular agents are bypassing the system by dialling officers direct and then raising a number of matters in one go. This will be monitored and managed accordingly.
Quality of Service	The quality of service to public is perceived to be declining. Management noted that as the call centre is providing elements of the advice there is still the same level of feedback but staff don't see some of it or hear the positive feedback.
Web site	It was felt that the redesign is too difficult for customers to access/find the planning search pages – potential further developments around a front page direct link above and beyond the do it online should continue to be developed.
Morale	Morale is low and some people don't like coming to work.

TABLE A3 Planning Strategy workshop 22 October 2010

Issue/Topic raised	Summary of concerns/discussion/solution/way forward
Capacity	UNISON's main challenge at the time of the dispute was capacity thus additional vacancies not being filled since the proposals were finalised (particularly in Planning Strategy) is a problem in principle. UNISON want to see something come out of the review which should be sooner rather than later.
Core Strategy	The work was carried out successfully
Development Opportunities	Career opportunities have opened up
Flexibility	The new flexible approach to the staff resource helps deliver business
Divisional working	The change has resulted in improved relationships and working across the Division.
GLO Network	There was a discussion around the success of the GLO network and capacity to accommodate the sustainability agenda
Specialist Roles	The loss of specialists (eg conservation and design) roles cannot continue without having a severe impact.
Maternity	Difficult to fully assess the localised impact in Planning Strategy due to the various overlapping maternity leave.
Vacancy Management	The vacancy management is a good thing because it is taking pressure off potential further redundancies (and on a divisional basis contributing to underspend targets). UNISON commented further that whilst using vacancies as a 'buffer zone' for potential redundancies is fine, some staff are concerned we are only just coping now and there should be reassurances about a potential 'up flex' when the economy does recover, and how this might happen. UNISON seeking some reassurance that when the economy improves, work increases and the division has more fee income as a result, this should result in staff increases rather than simply plugging the "artificial" deficit.

Annex B Copy of the Workstream Implementation Plan

REF	Workstream Description	Status Update
WS1	Accommodation, hotdesking, home and mobile working Demolition of wall between PC and BC and reorganisation of office layout to facilitate improved environment and generate efficiencies including the eventual relocation of 5th floor colleagues to third floor. Establish modern, cost effective mobile working arrangements for all 18 field staff.	Further to initial cost estimates by corporate property services, the Working Group met to consider revised proposals which will lead to a detailed layout and final cost estimates (£36,000 at present). Interim arrangements may need to be made given the wider context of the corporate plan for all Council accommodation. Meetings with Corporate Property and the staff accommodation working group are ongoing.
WS2	Mobile working pilot Implement mobile working pilot involving seven volunteer colleagues using dell tablets. To carry out appropriate risk assessments and to ensure hardware, software and connectivity all work to a satisfactory standard. Ensure that all pilot reviews are carried out in a timely manner and any issues arising are dealt with quickly and succinctly.	All risk assessments now completed. Experience spreadsheet being regularly used, the information provided is continuing to assist in problem solving. Works are continuing to address issues around connectivity (Netilla & 3G).
WS3	Member Interface - Delegation/Referral Revise the process for members to refer applications to committee for decision to include 21 day list and recommendation to agenda board.	Initial meeting held with Chair/Vice Chair. New informal briefing arrangements now introduced to improve communication on individual applications/ requests for agenda items.
WS4	Member Interface - Committee Operation Revised procedures including site visits, reports, debating and organisation.	Monthly Committee now established. Initial meeting held with Chair/Vice Chair. New informal briefing arrangements now introduced to improve communication on individual applications/ requests for agenda items.
WS5	Member Interface - e-committee Pilot electronic committees using sharepoint and other methods/technology	Workshop session for electronic plans held for 24/6 Committee. Feedback has now been shared with corporate centre as input into overall approach to electronic meetings etc. Electronic version of agenda now being distributed to members; next steps are to identify and work with volunteer Members to develop this and help them to use ICT at meetings.

WS6	Member Interface - Town Councils Revising the support to TCs by removing officer attendance and written reports in favour of electronic consultation and one-off support to town clerks	Presentations to TCs held, new arrangements have been written up as a protocol and came into effect June, after meeting with Alan Eastwood and Clerks. Some concerns about not being able to have access to advice and information (website issues etc). Westhoughton TC pursuing request for fee-based service.
WS7	Customer Contact Building on existing arrangement with the transfer of first contact calls to OSS in July 2010	Planning phones went live in OSS from 19 July; BC phones went live 4 October; initial feedback mostly positive and monitoring is continuing with colleagues in OSS.
WS8	Consultation Replace repeat consultation with greater degree of web self service (and via OSS) including amendments to letters and any changes to SCI	Preparation undertaken to identify appropriate agents/applicants to enable consultation to take place regarding changes to SCI. Identified need to do press notice. List sent for inclusion in SCI amendment 29/9/10. Letters drafted. Awaiting completion of changes to SCI Jan 11.
WS9	Validation – checklist Splitting out national requirements for validation of applications and reviewing the local checklist requirements	Changes agreed to validation process whereby invalid only on basis on National requirements only. Local list to be subject to request for additional info (14 days). To be implemented by end of October. Following that, review of the requirements in the local checklist to be undertaken.
WS10	Validation – process streamlining and simplifying the validation process for applications	Process amended and implemented. Changes being implemented on a rolling programme to resolve any problems and undertake continued improvements to process
WS11	ICT - asset refresh Purchase of new ICT hardware and review existing hardware provision (make use of in-warranty machines) to facilitate mobile working	All hardware with the exception of remainder of tablets (10) now installed.
WS12	ICT - new server	Now delivered due for installation by w/e 28/10/2010, now awaiting date from software supplier IDOX to complete.

WS13	ICT – training Phase 2 - training for pilot	Training now completed. BC & PC pilots now commenced and following an initial 2 month period the roll out plan is being discussed.
WS14	Building Control – inspections Range of alternative ways of working to accommodate the new divisional structure around Inspection Notification Framework to meet new CLG regulations	New scheme of charges were introduced on the 1st October 2010. These are based on an average risk as set out in the draft risk assessment document commissioned by CLG and that the builder is competent to carry out the work. There is scope within the scheme to invoice for additional charges if the builder is not competent. This additional charge will be determined by the time taken multiplied by the hourly rate.
WS15	Building Control – structural Range of alternative ways of working to accommodate the need for structural advice and calculations	The team leader continues to scrutinise the calculations before they are sent for checking. This has significantly reduced the costs of securing this advice.
WS16	Building Control – training Training of staff in the new systems and duties linked to getting the best out of software and support arrangements	Training completed
WS17	Culture, change management and training Organisation and development of dealing with change and team building sessions for staff.	5xhalf day change sessions and 4x half-day team building sessions held in June 2010 and July 2010. Feedback received and is generally positive.
WS18	Staff Training and Development Needs - Phase 1 Training plan to be completed on completion of final PDRs	PDR interviews have mostly been completed; remainder to be undertaken in next 2 weeks.
WS19	Staff Training and Development Needs - Phase 2 Phase 2 - Career Grade Pathways, Skills development and Competency Models for DO and AD staff to be developed and implemented.	Competency model produced in draft by Organisational Development and being reviewed by PDMT;
WS20	Enforcement New working arrangements in the registering and dealing with complaints, investigation and enforcement action	Systems up and running, all performance targets are being achieved. Six rounds of case review meetings have now been concluded. No major problems / concerns have been identified by staff or Members.

ANNEX C

Planning and Buildings Division

Joint Implementation Action Plan

Final Action Plan Log Progress Report – Friday 22 October 2010

(Workshops held 20th, 25th and 26th May 2010)

Ref.	Action Summary	Lead	Progress Update
1	OSS Error Log – The error log currently picks up (via Val) mistakes by OSS colleagues some of which are reported by Development Technicians. In future the error log will be a standing item on team meetings to enable Val to feedback what action is being taken to prevent errors happening again.	VW	This has been implemented
2	Validation Proforma - As part of the implementation of validation changes, the new system will include a new process and options include either a written proforma or continued use of Acolaid. POST WORKSHOP NOTES: The process of Inputting details into Acolaid was tested for 6 weeks. As a result from 2 August invalid applications invalid are now returned with a proforma indicating what is required. A copy of the proforma is retained and details are not stored on Acolaid. The checklist will be reviewed and monitored to support the validation process.	VW	This has been implemented
3	Working Groups and Champions – small working groups to include nominated staff representatives and champions will be used to feed into the implementation workstreams for elected member interface; telephone business rules (see No.6 below) accommodation, hot desking, home working and ICT trials and pilots. [POST WORKSHOP NOTE – Plan first]	TH JB GM	Working Groups and Champions are in place.
4	Accommodation – The options and proposals being developed will take account of practical issues including kitchen, rest rooms, meeting space and storage. POST WORKSHOP NOTES: Work is ongoing to identify an affordable solution further to initial cost estimates by corporate property services based on the options above	JB	The ongoing accommodation workstream will include this action log.
5	Clock Cards – Options for a unified clocking in system will be considered as part of (or following) the accommodation change	GM	This has been implemented.

6	<p>Telephone Business Rules set up, share and develop. Certain calls will need a particular approach eg. Dangerous Buildings; Inspection fee quotes; inspection requests; and the business rules will need to accommodate the types of call received. The rules will include parameters on call back and the accommodation of north/south teams in My Maps. SMS messaging as an option will be investigated. A process map is being developed and a working group will input into the rules and aim to capture the flexibility of the existing system arrangements.</p> <p>POST WORKSHOP NOTE: The working group initially created business rules for planning aspects of the service and telephone calls were redirected to OSS on 19 July. Positive feedback has been received from customers and OSS staff. Buildings calls have been live since 5 October supported by an A-Z Knowledge Base document</p>	VW	This has been implemented and is subject to ongoing operational monitoring.
7	<p>Telephone Technical Problems. Sarah Milward meeting Val 28 May to cover all telephone issues and identify source of problem with answer phone and call forwarding</p>	VW	The technical problems have been resolved
8	<p>Risk Assessments – The need for revised risk assessments will reviewed (eg around electronic working on site – up a scaffold etc)</p> <p>POST WORKSHOP NOTE: OHSU have completed training in the use of tablets for mobile/home working and DSE self-assessments are complete. The H&S Risk Assessment has been updated.</p>	MR	This has been implemented.
9	<p>Technical Support Team - Valerie is updating the list of roles and responsibilities for the TS Team and sharing this with all relevant staff. The roles for Principal Development Officer (Buildings) are being further clarified as part of the training sessions with Joanne due to be completed in early July. The agreed changes will be implemented following the training.</p>	VW	This has been implemented.
10	<p>Structural Calculations - The proposals for dealing with structural calculations will be reviewed in the context of the data gathering and options over June and July. An assessment of charges will take place then and identify the options in a paper</p>	MR	Revised arrangements for securing structural advice and calculations have been implemented.

APPENDIX 1

Report to: Executive Member Development,
Regeneration and Skills

Date: 22 February 2010

Report of: Director of Development and
Regeneration

Report No: EMDRS/92/10

Contact Officer: Tim Hill, Chief Planning Officer

Tele No: 01204 336004

Report Title: **Planning Division VFM Review**

**Confidential /
Non Confidential:**

This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

To consider the outcome of the Value for Money review of the Planning Division in Development and Regeneration and seek approval of the final proposals.

Recommendations:

The Executive Member is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the final proposals; and
- (ii) Subject to the approval of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Diversity, delegate implementation of the new structure, including details of voluntary redundancy arrangements and consequential recruitment and selection, to the Chief Executive and the Director of Development and Regeneration.

Decision:

Background Doc(s):

Appendix A1 Report to EMDRS 30 November 2009
Appendix A2 Frequently Asked Questions
Appendix A3 Unison response to the proposals
Appendix A4 Summary of Consultation Responses and Proposed Changes
Appendix A5 Revised Ringfence Arrangements
Appendix A6 Revisions to Job Descriptions and Person Specifications
Appendix A7 Letter to Chief Planning Officers from CLG 4.2.10

Other documents available on request:
Killian-Pretty Review Report, and Government Response 2009, PAS/IDeA
Peer Review 2007, ValueAdding.com review report 2008

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

(for use on Exec Rep)

Signed:

Leader / Executive Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

Summary:

See Section 1 of the attached report. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for this report, which is available on request.

APPENDIX 1

Planning Division Value for Money Review

Final Proposals

February 2010

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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council's Planning Division faces a combination of financial challenges over the short and medium term. First and foremost, the planning service relies on Housing and Planning Delivery Grant, a diminishing resource, to fund elements of core establishment costs. Secondly, changes to regulations are likely to impact on demand for a number of services, including planning control and land charges. Thirdly, demand has reduced sharply over the last two years as a result of the credit crunch, economic downturn and sluggish housing market; while demand is expected to recover somewhat, this is likely to take time. Lastly, the Council as a whole is being faced with expectations of significant budget reductions from 2010 onwards, and the Division will need to find its share of these additional savings.
- 1.2 To respond to these challenges means reducing the costs of delivering a range of services significantly over the next three to four years, and given the nature of expenditure within the Division this will inevitably impact on staffing levels through the need to restructure. However, simply reducing staff resources would result in falling service quality and levels. Changing the way in which key processes are carried out, particularly in planning and building control, will be vital in ensuring that service outcomes for customers are maintained and in making the most effective use of managers, senior and junior professionals and technical support staff.
- 1.3 The proposals in this report are for an overall reduction in staff establishment by 24.7 FTE from 76.6 FTE, including a reduction in senior managers from 12 to 8 (FTE); professional and specialist officers from 37.2 to 25.3 (FTE); and in technical and administrative support posts from 27.4 to 18.6 (FTE). This would however be coupled with more flexible, extended development opportunities through career grades, emphasising working across the Division.
- 1.4 Alongside this restructuring it is proposed to streamline business operations to deliver crisp and strategic services which emphasise value for money and outcomes for customers. A start has already been made on moving general customer enquiries to the One Stop Shop and good progress has been made on delivering services electronically, based on greater use of web-based self-service. Areas for redesign will include member roles and officer delegation, customer and consultee notification, and receipt/validation of applications as well as remote and mobile working.
- 1.5 This report sets out results of the formal consultation process and the Project Board's final proposals in response.

2.0 Background to the review

- 2.1 On 30 November 2009 the Executive Member for Development Regeneration and Skills approved a report setting out the need for a Value-for-money review of the Planning Division, and draft proposals for changes to the Division's structure and operations, for consultation with Unions, staff and service users. (See Appendix A1).
- 2.2 The underlying rationale for the review is the need to generate cost efficiencies within the Division's services to meet corporate budgetary targets and to address the continuing implications of reduced volumes and value of activity resulting from the economic downturn. This has recently been reinforced by Government notification that to aid economic recovery and support investment, planning fees should remain at the current rates, as "it is important that local authorities - like everyone in the public and private sectors – continue to focus on making efficiency savings to ensure that services are as cost effective as possible... authorities should be expected to reduce their costs to match a reduced workflow." (See Appendix A7).
- 2.3 The proposals are fundamentally to maintain a quality of service which is affordable in the context of the financial challenge of reducing cost of the Division by circa £1.1m. Because of the nature of the services involved, it will be necessary to reduce the cost of the staff establishment in order to achieve these efficiencies.
- 2.4 Following the consultation period, which ended on 15th January 2010, this report now addresses the key issues arising and puts forward revised proposals for final approval by the Executive Member for Development, Regeneration and Skills, and the Executive Member for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Diversity.

3.0 Consultation process

- 3.1 To coincide with the publication of the consultation proposals, "at risk" letters were issued to affected staff on 20 November. Following informal briefings to staff and to the trades unions, formal consultation on the VFM proposals commenced on 2 December 2009. The 30 day consultation period expired 31st December 2009 however this original closing date for comments was extended to 8th January to allow additional time because of the Christmas break. Following a request from the trades unions because of disruption arising from the exceptional weather conditions, the Project Board agreed to a further extension of one week to 15th January to enable comments to be collated.

3.2 Key elements of the formal consultation have included:

- A formal briefing session and presentation for all staff on 1 December 2009
- A staff consultation pack containing in addition to some of the things listed below, the original report to Executive Member for Development Regeneration and Skills; a draft timetable; details of support for staff; and a comments and questions form;
- Access to all job descriptions and person specifications existing and proposed;
- Maintenance of a staff teamsite using sharepoint, for staff to access information and a dedicated email address to contact the project team;
- Weekly Special DJCC meetings (other than over the Christmas and New Year period) with minutes uploaded to the staff teamsite;
- Weekly updates to the log of FAQ uploaded to the staff teamsite (See Appendix A2);
- Weekly update of the Vacancy Bank register on the staff teamsite, with support for staff who have taken up opportunities to apply for jobs as a result;
- Responding to specific requests for information from the trades unions;
- Holding personal meetings with all members of staff attended by HR and/or trades unions representatives where required;
- Following up meetings with more specific support (for example around interview technique, or enrolment onto OD provided sessions);
- Requesting expressions of interest (without prejudice at this stage) from staff for voluntary redundancy and for other forms of flexible working including reductions in hours;
- Setting up a briefing and workshop for around 12 key developers/agents (this has not proved possible within the formal consultation period with a poor response rate. It is currently programmed for 22 February 2010).
- Analysing feedback from staff and customers on the initial implementation of the new One Stop Shop arrangements.

4.0 Key issues raised through formal consultation

4.1 The formal Unison response to the proposals is set out in full at Appendix A3. In summary, the main issues raised in that response are:

- that the proposed staff cuts will lead to a significantly worse service, unable to meet the demands of elected members and citizens or the Council's statutory obligations;
- staff cuts of the scale and timing proposed are not justified and opportunities to generate income to offset the financial problems should be investigated further;
- The need for more details on the proposed business process changes, in particular related to the introduction of mobile and flexible working where there will be implications for ICT, and the move towards more generic working with different line and project management arrangements, including the need for workload monitoring;
- The need for clarity about which work will be reduced, given lower priority or not undertaken, given the proposed staff reductions;
- Concern about the loss of specialist capacity from the Division as a result of the introduction of generic roles;
- Additional requirements for staff development and training arising from the adjustments to staff roles and more generic job descriptions, which will require financial and staff resources;
- Details of additional income streams to be considered, including any potential in the Strategic Planning, Research and Sustainable Development areas;
- The view that all business process changes should be implemented and embedded before any changes to structures are undertaken;
- The impact of the revised structure on Building Control, and the difficulties likely to be faced in providing an acceptable/high quality service with fewer staff.
- The potential loss in Building Control, of supervisory management capacity which is needed for quality assurance in any move towards a "risk-based" approach, and the potential reduction in capacity from making two Assistant posts part of a more generic team;
- Similarly the impact on planning enforcement, given that this is a key priority for Members and for citizens;
- The extent to which the proposals remove the specialist team focus on Sustainable Development, with just one specialist post remaining;
- The extent to which the proposals downplay the importance of urban design and conservation, and the value added to the Council's work;
- Difficulty in identifying further efficiencies in spatial planning and research service areas, given the increased importance of the statutory local development framework and the loss of 5 posts since 2007;

- The extent to which the Development Officer and Trainee Development Officer job descriptions and person specifications appropriately cover all aspects of the Division's operations fairly - they seem to be focused on the planning work rather than other business areas or disciplines;
 - The need for clarity around career progression; and
 - The extent to which this might act against the ability of staff across the Division to compete for jobs at those levels fairly, or to access career development opportunities outside formal planning qualifications.
- 4.2 Appendix A4 sets out, for each of the recommendations in the Unison response, including matters raised at the weekly DJCC meetings, the Board's proposed response. Appendix A4 also incorporates, for the sake of setting out a comprehensive response to the consultation, the Board's proposed response to what was said by individuals and teams during personal meetings, staff briefing sessions and on the proforma issued with Part 7 of the Staff Consultation Pack where these comments haven't already been covered in the FAQ (Appendix 2).

5.0 Proposed Changes arising

- 5.1 The Project Board believes that given the business process opportunities that have been identified, and given the underlying requirement to make significant savings, the proposals will not lead to a diminished level of services and will instead shape services much better for the future, whilst addressing the need for cost efficiencies.
- 5.2 The proposals accommodate some changes. Appendix A4 sets out in detail the reasoning behind some key areas where the Project Board, having considered the points made, take the view that the proposed structure should be amended, namely:
- General amendments to structure diagram to better represent the Divisional approach and links;
 - Replacement of a Grade 8 Principal Development Officer (Building) with a Grade 9 Team Leader (Buildings);
 - Reduction in Principal Development Officer (Planning) on the Planning Control side from 3 to 2.5 FTE posts;
 - Increase in Assistant Development Officers (formerly Trainee Development Officer) from 5 to 7 FTE posts;
 - Reduction in Development Technicians from 10 to 8.6 FTE posts;
 - Amendments to the proposed ringfence for certain posts to reflect these changes; a recent resignation; and the need for a dual ringfence around the Assistant Development Officer and Development Technician posts for the three Technical Support/Technicians currently within the Spatial Planning/Research

teams (See Appendix A5); and

- Amendments to job descriptions and person specifications (See Appendix A6)

5.3 These changes have a net effect of being cost neutral and are reflected in the revised proposed structure diagram at Annex 3 below.

6.0 Implications of expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy and other flexible working

6.1 As a starting point it should be noted that, during the consultation period, a member of staff was successful in finding a new post within the Council through the Vacancy Bank, whilst another has since found alternative employment outside of Bolton Council. These have reduced the residual final numbers likely to be redeployed.

6.2 Currently, 13 people (12.3 FTE) have expressed their interest in taking voluntary redundancy. Since having received their individual estimated figures for pension and redundancy, at the time of publication of this report eight have confirmed, without prejudice, their wish to leave, four remain undecided and one has now confirmed a wish to stay. Final decisions will be required from each of those interested in voluntary redundancy by 17:00 on Thursday 25th February, after which time the Project Board will consider each case in accordance with Council policy and procedures, and will approve those which meet these requirements.

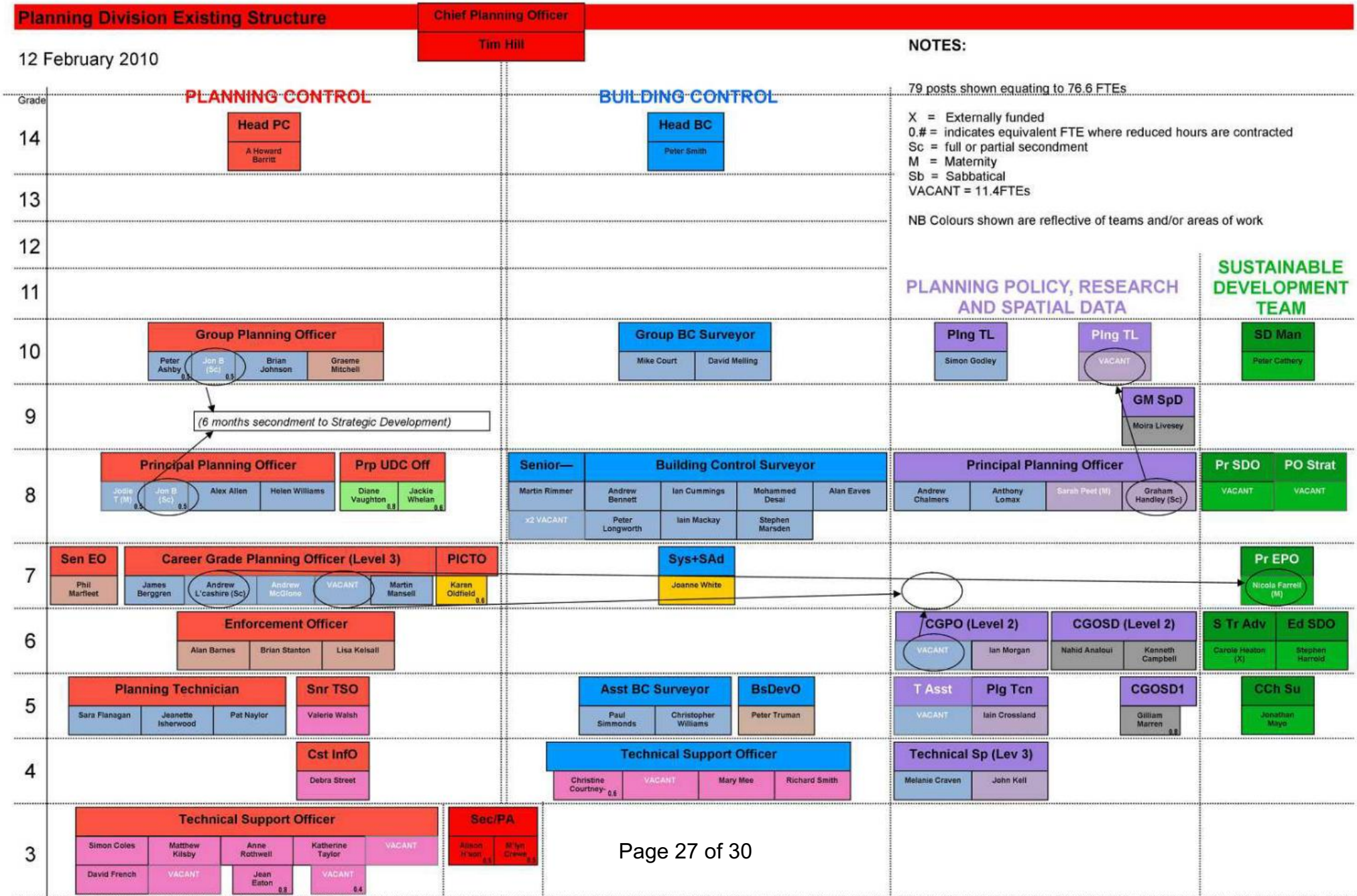
6.3 As such the revised ring fence arrangements at Appendix A5 should be regarded as indicative only. Nevertheless, it is clear that the number of staff ultimately facing redeployment will have significantly reduced, from the 15.4 FTE originally anticipated to fewer than 10 FTE.

7.0 Recommendations

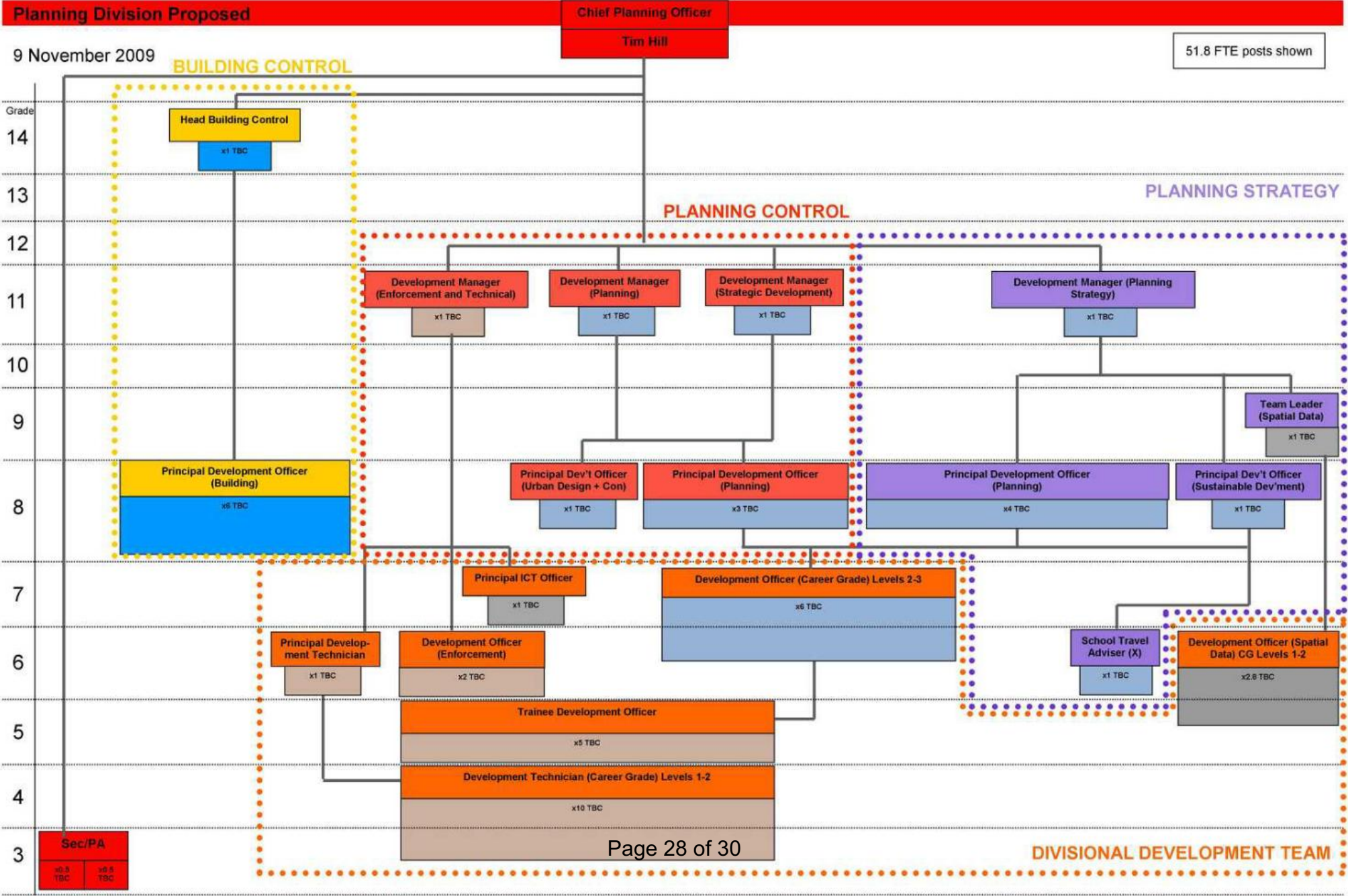
7.1 The Executive Member is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the final proposals; and
- (ii) Subject to the approval of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Diversity, delegate implementation of the new structure, including details of voluntary redundancy arrangements and consequential recruitment and selection, to the Chief Executive and the Director of Development and Regeneration.

Annex 1 Existing Structure Diagram



Annex 2 Structure Diagram as proposed in Consultation Proposals



Annex 3 Final Proposed Structure Diagram

Planning Division —51.9 FTE posts

12 February 2010

